

**Remarks by Ambassador Lawrence Butler**  
(as prepared for delivery)

Completion of Conservation Activities at the Church of Sveti Spas  
Ambassador's Fund for Cultural Preservation 2004  
Friday, November 12, 2004  
11:00 a.m.  
Church of Sveti Spas  
Skopje, Macedonia

- Thank you, Minister Stefanovski and Mr. Antoniev, and my greetings to all of those here today representing the cultural and artistic talent in the Republic of Macedonia.
- We are here today in front of this beautiful church to celebrate the completion of restoration work paid for by the Ambassador's Fund for Cultural Preservation. Let me give you a little background about this unique and wonderful program.
- The U.S. Congress initiated the Ambassador's Fund for Cultural Preservation in July 2001 because of the belief that cultural preservation offers us an opportunity to show a different face of America to other countries, one that goes beyond commercial interests or political and military affairs.
- The purpose of the fund, which is administered by the Department of State, is to promote cooperation with countries to reduce the threat of damage to irreplaceable cultural heritage, and to develop long-term strategies for preserving cultural property. Since its inception, this program has awarded 205 grants in 96 countries, totalling more than four million dollars.
- In 2004, the Ambassador's Fund for Cultural Preservation awarded a total of one million U.S. dollars around the world. This year's awards include work with archive preservation, museum collections, historic sites, and other important projects.
- This year my staff nominated this project at Sveti Spas for consideration by the Ambassador's Fund. We were very pleased that Embassy Skopje was one of the 41 posts selected to receive a Grant Award. This project was selected in a rigorous competition, in which 96 proposals for cultural preservation projects were received from throughout the world.

- I am happy that this is the third year in which Macedonia has been awarded funds through this program. Previous grants for Macedonia supported the conservation and restoration of the “Stoa” Public Building in Vardarski Rid, Gevgelija; the excavation and restoration of the Roman Forum at Stobi; preservation of the double-winged door at the entrance of the Faik Pasha Mosque in Skopje; and the repair of ceramic tiles at the Ilinden Monument in Krushevo.
- This year, I am pleased to note, a substantial grant of 30,000 dollars supported the successful conservation activities here at the Church of Sveti Spas. The grant was awarded through the Ministry of Culture to the Institute for Cultural Preservation of Skopje.
- Sveti Spas is not only an important historical, cultural and spiritual landmark, but also a beautiful and visible testament to the history of Macedonia and the region. Now this central piece of history can be seen by future generations in a finer form.
- The roof, as you can see today, is extensively reconstructed. The work that has gone on over the past few months has reversed damage to the facade of the church that had developed over centuries, and it will protect the church from rain and snow. The stonework that we can now see had been covered. It now has a more authentic and historic appearance. In fact, during the reconstruction, a two-layer fresco was uncovered on the southern wall. My colleagues tell me that the first layer dates from the late 19<sup>th</sup> or early 20<sup>th</sup> century, while the layer underneath still remains to be analyzed.
- My congratulations and appreciations go to Minister Blagoj Stefanovski and Institute Director Jani Antoniev, and to all the experts who carried out and documented the restoration. I am proud of the work we have accomplished as a team to restore the Church of Sveti Spas through the Ambassador’s Fund, and I hope to continue the strong Macedonian-American partnership in the field of culture in the years to come.

